for which indent has already been placed with the Staff Selection Commission by the Central Passport Organisation.

Demonstration by Tibetan Refugees During Li-Peng's Visit

4449. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tibetan refuges had organised demonstrations during the visit of Chinese leader Li Peng;

(b) if so, whether this was not a misuse of hospitality of the Indian Government;

(c) whether Chinese Government has expressed their unhappiness over such demonstrations; and

(d) whether these demonstrations come in the way of normalization of our tics with China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) No, Sir.

Delay in issuance of passports

4450. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "The eternal wait for a passport" published in the 'Statesman* dated 24th January, 2001;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government are aware that people who are desirous of passports are unduly harassed and it takes even years together to issue a passport; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to streamline the functioning of various passport offices in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The facts of the case are as follows:-

(i) While applying for a fresh passport in 1991 the applicant had suppressed the information regarding his return from the US on an Emergency Certificate (EC). The EC was issued to him as he was deported from the US after being convicted on an illegal drug trafficking charge.

(ii) As per the Passport Act, 1967, a passport can be denied to an Indian national under the public interest clause and the applicant's offence justified denial of a passport.

(iii) The applicant applied for a fresh passport again in 1998 and fresh enquiries were made.

(iv) As the applicant had been without a passport for the last many years and a clear police report was received, a lenient view was taken and the passport was issued to him in September 2000.

(c) The main reasons for delay in issue of passports are due to receipt of negative or incomplete police verification reports, discrepancies in documents submitted by the applicants, lack of response by the applicants to the queries raised by the Passport Offices and suppression of vital information by the applicants.

(d) Streamlining the functioning of passport offices in the country is an ongoing and continuous process. It has been the Government's constant endeavour to expand and modernise the network of Passport Offices and Passport Application Collection Centres throughout the country keeping in mind the need to provide prompt and efficient service to the public. Improvements brought about to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of passport offices include the computerisation of 21 of the 28 Passport Offices, introduction of the tele-enquiry system, launch of the Central Passport Organisaton Website and also at selected RPOs, setting up of grievances redressal mechanism in all passport offices, introduction of the machine-writing of passport booklet and scanning of index cards etc. The Government has recently introduced a facility for acceptance of passport applications at designated speed post centres to reduce the congestion at the passport offices.